



*Remarks by Brigadier General Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.,
Commander, Mississippi Valley Division, at the
Kickoff Program for National Women's History
Month, Vicksburg District, 6 March 2001*

[Greetings and Amenities.]

(Col. Crear, Dr. Gayles, Mr. George, Ms. Hinton-Lee, Warren
Central High Naval ROTC, Mr. Jones-national anthem,
Ms. Fields-invocation.)

Throughout this month, the accomplishments of women will
be recognized at luncheons, dinners, special recognition
ceremonies, and a host of other events.

It is Women's History Month -- traditionally a time to reaffirm
women's contributions to our nation and their integral role in
our history.

However, in a society that designates weeks and months to recognize everything from macaroni to yogurt producers, the significance of these designations can easily be neglected or lost.

Such should not be the case with Women's History Month. This year's national theme, "Celebrating Women of Courage and Vision," well depicts the story of American women -- the story of strong, courageous, and persevering women whose challenges to social, political, and economic inequities and other injustices shaped our nation.

Today's generation owes them remembrance and honor, for we all stand on their shoulders. They have indeed put their stamp on America, paving the way for us to follow and giving us hope for the future.

Today, women, from Korea to Kuwait and from Sarajevo to San Diego, are preserving America's freedom in ways that their mothers and grandmothers could have only dreamed.

Both in the military and society in general, women have certainly made tremendous gains.

Indeed, as little as a generation ago, the teaching of women's role in history was almost nonexistent, give or take a few token profiles of more famous women.

Today, however, not only are women up from the footnote of history, in many cases they are in the forefront. At many universities, academic degrees in women's studies are common. In addition, in many disciplines the contributions and sociopolitical behavior of women are studied through specific courses.

These courses and programs are abundant with accounts that deepen our understanding of history, expand the mind, and tug at the heart. Indeed, they have expanded what we now view as history to include hearth, home, and workplace, as well as government and politics. They have excavated insights and perspectives that were buried for generations.

Such changes in the way women are viewed deserve recognition and celebration.

These changes and opportunities are visible throughout the military as well as the civilian business world. Women continue to take on jobs once reserved only for men, and increasingly more women are in our top leadership.

We all must recognize that expanding opportunity is not just the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do. It's not a modern nicety, it's a necessity.

Our team could not function and we could not perform our mission without the service of women both in and out of uniform.

However, women aren't the only ones who have reaped benefits from the movement. Men, too, have experienced increased choices and opportunities. As stereotypes faded, men have been able to take on jobs traditionally held by women without societal scorn or ridicule, to include assuming the role of primary nurturer by remaining in the home.

Perhaps no other movement in our history has so fundamentally altered the way we think, work and behave, and how men and women view each other.

We -- both women and men -- have a great deal to celebrate during Women's History Month. Decades of hard-fought change have led us to the point where such a celebration can even occur. It should be embraced to its fullest, and it should be nurtured so future generations will know we helped make a difference.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to hearing the other speakers today and encourage you to participate in the other activities throughout the month celebrating Women's History.